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Conference Abstract

The Sociological History of Transforming TDWG to Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG)

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Abstract

Thirty-seven years—why celebrate this prime number anniversary of the founding of the Taxonomic Databases Working Group (TDWG) in 1985? Because we wanted to look at the history of TDWG through its people (and coincidentally, 37˚C is considered "normal" human temperature, so why not?).

Records from 1985's inaugural meeting at the Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques in Geneva, Switzerland, 28–30 September show that it was attended by 12 representatives of the botanical community. Although the attendees were listed by salutation (i.e., Dr., Prof., Mr.) and by first initials along with surnames, the group was all male, composed mainly of European and American botanists with doctorates.

How has TDWG morphed over these 37 years from a group of geeky botanists in the early days of museum computerization and six years before the World Wide Web was introduced to the public, to the organization known today as Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG)?

TDWG has always been an open and community-driven organization with decisions made by consensus. Anyone can become a member, individuals as well as institutions (including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, programs, and projects). Everything TDWG produces comes from the expertise, collaboration, and support of its

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members—people and organizations who create, manage, integrate, and analyze biodiversity information.

Today's TDWG looks very different from the one in 1985, but the seeds of the organization were there, even then.

While this presentation is about TDWG's history as an organization, its focus will be on the heart of TDWG: its people. We would like to show how the organization has evolved in terms of gender balance, inclusivity actions, and our engagement to promote and enhance diversity at all levels. But more importantly, where do we—as a community—want to go in the future?

Keywords

community, collaboration, association history, diversity, inclusion

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Conflicts of interest

None